have you come to fight the war

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have you come to fight the war

by narcissablaxk

Summary

hello, hello, sad angel, have you come to fight the war? the drums, a fire, a calling, my soul marches out the door.

Daniel finds Johnny after he hurts himself at the hospital to see Miguel.

Notes

So this came from a tumblr post that said *Johnny bashing his head into the paper towel dispenser is actually one of the darkest moments of the entire show* by robbyykeene, and a subsequent long think on my part. I wanted someone to take Johnny's self-harm tendencies seriously, and this is what came out of it. Please, please take the tags seriously. Do not read this if it might trigger you.

Things didn't go according to plan.

Well, that would be the understatement of the fucking year, Johnny thought, adjusting the white collar of the doctor's coat in the mirror. His left eye was still blurry, like he had a film over it, so he couldn't really see if he looked like a believable doctor. Not that it mattered, really. He just had to get past some of those nurses – eagle-eyed, cramping his style.

Miguel was on the other side, he thought, trying to bolster himself. Still, the ache in his back, in the fleshy part of his side wasn't abating, even with adrenaline, or determination, or whatever he wanted to call it.

"Oh, hey, you're a doctor," a guy said, coming out of the stall – Johnny wondered briefly if he'd flushed – he hadn't heard the noise, but he kept hearing a hissing in that left ear anyway. Had the caveman who hit him in the eye hit him in the ear too? He didn't really remember. "Maybe you can help…" the guy trailed off as he looked closer. "You're not a doctor," he said before ducking out the door.

Fuck.

Okay, so maybe he wouldn't get past the doctors like this.

He peeled the coat off and stuffed it into the trash can. He needed a new plan. A new…his eyes landed on the metal paper towel dispenser above the trash can. Surely, if he were injured, he'd have to be let in, right?

He had to try, at least.

The first blow almost knocked him out. He felt it rattle through his skull, like the meat inside was shaking from the impact. The second one tore open his skin – the hot blood on his skin was a temperature shock, even if he felt the skin give way on the screw that was sticking up now that his first blow had dented the whole thing.

He pressed a paper towel into the blood, thinking absently that head wounds always bleed the most.

And then the bathroom door opened and he heard a voice say *"Johnny, what the fu –"*

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Daniel remembered when Amanda told him that Sam had him wrapped around her little finger. He had been pleased by that assessment at the time – all he'd ever wanted to be was a father, so in love with his children that they had him wrapped around their finger. It was a privilege, to love someone so much, and to be loved in return. Why shouldn't he spoil them.

Except now it was a character flaw, a curse somehow, because if he had been a little more disinterested, a little less enthusiastic about seeing himself in Sam, in seeing his legacy continued, he might not have ever taught her karate and they might not be here, Daniel lingering outside ICU hoping to see Carmen Diaz, hoping to offer her anything she might need – food, someone to water her plants, hell, someone to blame.

He was already blaming himself enough to take more without really noticing.

Except Carmen wasn't there, and after a few hours of waiting, he had to admit he wasn't going to finish his pilgrimage today. So he went into the bathroom, to wash his hands free of all the doors he'd touched on his way in, and found blood on the floor.

And Johnny Lawrence holding a saturated paper towel to a wound in his forehead, looking like he was at the bottom of a two-day bender.

Daniel knew Johnny had an alcohol problem – he'd never seen it up close like this, beyond seeing him, reeking of whiskey, at the dealership that first day, but he'd been so high on the reunion, so surprised and pleasantly taken aback, that he hadn't noticed until later.

Now, it was inescapable.

Johnny looked at him like he didn't even realize he was there, holding the paper towel to his head, and it wasn't even absorbing anything anymore, the blood was just pouring down his face and into his shirt, his already dirty shirt with crusted blood already in it. Daniel swallowed down a wave of nausea – he'd never been good with blood.

And then Johnny swayed on the spot, and Daniel pushed it down to catch him.

He didn't really catch him. He mostly broke his fall – Johnny was

heavy, too heavy for him to hold up, too much of a wall of muscle for him. He went crashing into the stall door, wincing past the pain in his back as he slid down to the floor, Johnny half on top of him, hand falling away from the wound in his forehead.

“What did you do?” Daniel asked, trying to get up from underneath him, to go get help. His eyes landed on the paper towel dispenser, above them both now, hanging perilously from two screws, blood smeared on the corner.

The answer was there, but he stared at it anyway, stared and stared until he felt like he was going to throw up.

Because *he did it to himself*, he thought in horror.

It was so easy to say that alcoholism was something one did to oneself, but addiction was complicated, Daniel knew that. His aunt in New Jersey was an alcoholic, he knew what the ugliness was, and how she tried to escape it and never could. But this was something different.

He stumbled out into the hallway and grabbed a nurse, who got more, and then Daniel didn’t think about much else for a little while. He just watched the process without seeing, without listening.

“Are you family?” the nurse finally asked him, and he knew by the way she spoke that she’d asked him this question before, and he had to shake his head.

“His boyfriend?” Another no.

“A stranger?”

“We’re friends,” he said hoarsely. “I – I need to stay with him, if that’s possible.”

The nurse seemed to pity him in a way he didn’t understand. “Sure,” she said, patting his arm. “You can follow us, we’re going to take him down to triage. He doesn’t need to be up here. Do you know why he’d be up here, in ICU?”

Daniel swallowed past the lump in his throat and nodded. “He was trying to visit someone.”

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Johnny was used to causing pain – even causing himself pain was familiar. Sometimes he wondered if that was the only thing he was good at. He'd excelled at karate, and he'd been told that the way to measure your success was by beating your opponent – by hurting them. And he'd shone, like a star, above and beyond everyone else.

But he was so good at hurting people, he could see them clearly like they'd lined up in front of him: his mother, Bobby, Daniel, Ali, Shannon, Carmen, Robby, Miguel. They were all there, a jury of his peers, of his psychological and moral superiors, frowning down at him, and it *hurt*, it ached worse than any other pain, worse than anything he'd ever done to himself.

Because he was good at that too, but hurting himself felt different than hurting everyone else. It wasn't something that he carried with him, like a physical weight. Those were punishments, things he had to atone for.

When he drank himself to delirium, that was because he deserved it. He deserved to be lost and confused and incoherent. He deserved the pain of the hangover that hit him the next day. Sometimes it was the only thing that told him he was alive. The pain.

He wasn't like those teenagers, the ones who talked about using knives and razors and all that. No, that was pussy shit, but picking fights that he couldn't win, feeling sick and not taking medicine, going two days without eating, those were punishments, weren't they? Wasn't that the same thing? It felt the same now, in this weird white room that he was in now, whatever was underneath him starchy and impersonal, something warm holding carefully onto his arm.

"Mr. Lawrence?" a voice prompted. "Mr. Lawrence, can you open your eyes for me?"

No, he couldn't, except his eyes were already opening, against his will, his body a stupid tool that he couldn't control. There was a light there, and he flinched away from it, especially because gloved hands were poking at the sore spot near his left eye.

"Alright, okay, thank you, Mr. Lawrence," the nurse said. "I'm going to get the doctor," she said. "Can you make sure he doesn't fall asleep?"

"Yeah," and then Johnny remembered Daniel's face, draining of color when he saw Johnny standing there, holding his forehead, dripping blood all over the floor, the way he said his name, like he was

witnessing Johnny committing murder and not just bleeding everywhere, as if that seemed any different now.

When he chanced to open his eyes again, the nurse was gone, and Daniel was surveying his face, something so painfully sad in the lines around his eyes that Johnny turned away, toward the wall.

“Why would you do this?” Daniel asked, and the dismay in his voice, the hurt, it dug into his skin and burrowed like a fucking tick, worse than disapproval. “John, please –”

“Fuck you, LaRusso,” Johnny muttered. “What are you doing here, anyway?”

A strained silence held for a few moments before Daniel sighed. “I was trying to see Carmen, see if she needed anything.”

“They won’t let you in unless you’re family,” Johnny said.

Daniel went quiet, for so long that Johnny finally chanced another look at him. Daniel was looking at him carefully, a twist in his mouth that Johnny couldn’t name, couldn’t reason out. And then Daniel blinked.

“You did this so you could get into the ICU?” he asked incredulously. “Do you know how badly you would’ve had to be hurt to get into the ICU?”

“LaRusso –”

“And a fucking *head wound?* You could have *killed yourself*, Johnny, do you realize that?” he was raising his voice now, delicate gloves off, the worry in his posture fading into anger, and *fine*, Johnny thought, he could work with that. He was used to that.

“Who gives a shit?” he asked. “I didn’t, and if you think I’m going to thank you for that, you can forget it. Just fuck off, LaRusso, I don’t need this.”

“You don’t need this?” Daniel asked. “Don’t need what? Don’t need me to tell you that you’re being a fucking idiot, again?” He paused, and Johnny could hear him taking a breath, a long enough one that the insult in his statement sunk in and lodged next to the first wound. “I’m sorry,” he said. “I’m – I just don’t understand why you’d do this.”

“I don’t have a choice –”

"*Like hell!*" Daniel exclaimed. Johnny looked back over at him, at the coiled energy that Daniel just seemed to be holding in his hand, ready to be unleashed, his mouth tight like he was trying not to yell at him or trying not to cry. Or both.

His face softened when he looked at him, softened enough that he pulled his bottom lip into his mouth and gnawed on it. It looked a little worn already, like he'd been doing it for a while.

"They want to keep you here for 72 hours," he said finally. "Suicide watch."

"*What the fuck?*" he tried to sit up, so fast that Daniel had to jump up to push him back down, and Johnny realized, for the first time, that his hands were strapped down to the bed. "I don't need to –"

"You gave yourself a serious concussion," Daniel said softly. "You're covered in bruises, Johnny, all over. They're going to give you a sonogram, to check for internal bleeding." He sighed again, so heavily that Johnny wondered if he was going to cry. If he was on the edge of crying. "What did you do?"

"Got in a fight –"

"Why?" It was desperate now, like Daniel had to understand, had to or else.

He shrugged. He didn't really remember now, though if he said that, would Daniel say it was because of the concussion? Because he'd smashed his head on so many fucking things?

Daniel's hand landed on his arm again, and Johnny realized Daniel was avoiding the dirty bandages on his hand – he'd punched through that car window. He looked down at them; they were clean and fresh now.

"Your mom was your emergency contact," Daniel said quietly, and something in Johnny's chest thudded painfully, so painfully he felt his left eye tear up. It was the fucking bruise, he told himself. "How long has it been since you've updated –"

"I don't go to the fucking hospital, LaRusso," Johnny snapped. "I don't have insurance."

"I already took care of it," Daniel said simply. "And I put my name down as your emergency contact."

“I don’t –”

“If you don’t want them to call me, then stop hurting yourself,” Daniel said, a little waspishly. “Maybe that’ll motivate you.”

He laughed a little, aching in the chest. “Fuck you, LaRusso.”

When he looked over again, Daniel was almost smiling. And then the doctor came in, and Daniel leaned back in the chair, away from him.

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There would be no getting around a 72 hour psych hold, Daniel realized as the doctor started talking. Johnny had a concussion, and an x-ray would show them that he had at least two cracked ribs, a fractured hand, and a bruise that could easily turn into a deadly blood clot. He would need stitches in his forehead, maybe even in his hand.

“Can he have visitors?” Daniel asked, when the doctor was done, and Johnny was looking up at the ceiling again. “During…during the 72 hours?”

“No,” the doctor said simply. “No outside contact, no phone, no Internet. No nothing.” He looked back at Johnny. “You will meet with a licensed psychotherapist each day, and we will determine if you should be held longer or if you should be released on your own recognizance.”

“I don’t know what that means –”

“If they think you’re a danger to yourself or to others, they’ll keep you here,” Daniel said.

He hoped Johnny understood what he was saying – *please watch what you say.*

Get the help you need but don’t let them keep you here forever.

***

Three days in the hospital also meant three days without booze. Johnny didn’t realize until his head started hurting an hour after Daniel left, telling him in no uncertain terms that he would be there to pick him up when the 72 hours were up.

A day before this, they were so angry at each other they couldn’t speak.

The medicine helped the aches and the pains, but it didn't take away withdrawal. And the way the psychotherapist looked at him when she said, "Can we talk about why you carry your trauma with you at the forefront? Can we talk about why you think you deserve punishment?" He deserved a drink.

He deserved a drink.

***

"We suggested a few facilities for him," the nurse told Daniel at the end of the three days. "At least for the next few days, so he can get past the withdrawal. He can't drink while he's on this medication, we've explained that to him already, but if he's not going to check himself into one of the facilities, then someone needs to make sure he doesn't drink."

"I will," Daniel said woodenly. He hadn't slept much in the past few days, kept up by the sound of Sam crying in her room, the door locked sometimes when he tried to go check on her, Amanda's stony silence leaving such a heavy cloud over the whole house that it followed him even when she wasn't there.

"He was asking for you," the nurse said softly. "In his sleep."

That hurt, but he couldn't explain why. But someone was wheeling Johnny over to him in a wheelchair, and he looked sick, but the wound wasn't swollen anymore, and the bruise in his eye had started to recede. He looked somehow better and worse.

"You brought me clothes," Johnny said.

"Couldn't let you leave here in the other ones," Daniel said simply. "Come on," he took the handles of the wheelchair and started wheeling him out, holding the bag of Johnny's soiled clothes and a folder of paperwork.

"Is there any news –"

"Miguel is awake," Daniel said in explanation. "That's all I know."

"And Robby?"

"Juvie," Daniel said.

"But you found him?" Johnny was twisting around in the wheelchair

to see Daniel's face now, and Daniel put a hand on his shoulder to keep him still.

"Yeah," he said tiredly. "A lot has happened."

"Well, I can't sleep anyway," Johnny said. "So tell me about it."

He could sleep, after all, because ten minutes into the drive, Daniel looked over and Johnny was dozing in the front seat, mouth open. He just turned the music down a little and kept driving.

***

If asked, Daniel would say that the next few weeks were like having a newborn baby. He woke at all hours to check on Johnny, to make sure that he was still sleeping restlessly in the other room. He helped him through the fever, through the shakes, through the hallucinations. He petted his hair when he had nightmares, he helped him shower, helped him dress, cleaned the stitches. He made him breakfast, introduced him to Pepsi to replace beer.

He stayed up late with him, watching *Iron Eagle* for the fourteenth time, because if he fell asleep while he watched it, he didn't have nightmares. He listened to a delirious, fevered Johnny tell stories about his mother.

He spent hours with his daughter, too, and sent flowers to Carmen, tried to be everywhere at once. He'd never been more exhausted in his life.

Johnny had to keep going to the therapist. Daniel didn't know who told him it was a requirement, but sometimes Johnny would offer Daniel some little sentence that he knew he got from her, from sitting in a room and talking about his feelings, and Daniel would be knocked speechless for a while.

He kept paying for it. It wasn't even a question.

He wasn't sure when Johnny just…moved into Miyagi's house with him. Probably around the same time that Amanda asked him to leave their house. He hadn't said anything about it to Johnny, but Johnny had looked at his face for a long time and patted the couch cushion beside him and said, "*Dirty Dancing* is on."

Daniel could never be sad when *Dirty Dancing* was on. He didn't know when Johnny figured that out.

***

Johnny forgot what it was like to live alone. Maybe it was just that Daniel was always talking, that the house always smelled like food or plants or something. It was full of something all of the time. He'd forgotten what it was like to live in the absence of something.

His therapist told him that was what love felt like.

He thought about that sentence a lot, more than he thought about PTSD or the struggle of addiction recovery, about rewiring his brain to think about something other than alcohol. He thought about it all the time. Because she was right, wasn't she?

The last time he'd felt loved was when he lived in a ramshackle apartment with his mother. He was maybe seven years old, and the walls were painted orange. He'd hated it when they moved in, but his mom had put on a Fleetwood Mac album in her beat up record player and they ate cold macaroni and cheese on the floor because they didn't have furniture and he felt loved.

He felt so incredibly held and cherished that he wished he could paint a room orange now. He hated the color orange, but it loved him like his mother did.

Around the time that he convinced Carmen to let him see Miguel, he mentioned it to Daniel. The color orange.

Miyagi's little house was still littered with boxes from Johnny's apartment, but when he came home that evening, reaching for a can of Pepsi in the fridge, Daniel had stuck some orange paint samples to the fridge, right at his eyeline.

He wasn't home – he was visiting with Sam and Anthony.

Johnny stared at them for a long time. He didn't know what else he expected. Daniel was physically incapable of not giving people what they wanted, of rationalizing that it was what they needed. He moved them from the fridge to a wall and considered them like people did fine art, he supposed.

Picked out the one that matched the shitty apartment.

When he told Daniel which one, Daniel nodded, and a week later, they were painting a wall in the living room that ugly orange, and Daniel was wearing a ratty Fleetwood Mac shirt that almost hung off his

narrow shoulders. It felt like looking at God, seeing it come together like that, watching cycles break and repeat.

Daniel didn't stop him when he kissed him. He just sighed a little and held onto the front of Johnny's shirt, like he'd float away if he didn't hold on.

Johnny remembered the hand on his arm at the hospital, a warm and comforting weight that had distracted him from the rest.

Daniel kissed like he lived – eagerly and enthusiastically and, more than anything, generously. He poured himself into everything like a liquid looking for a glass of the perfect shape, and he was constantly offering himself up to Johnny to be consumed. Johnny wondered if all the bandages he wore would always have Daniel's name on them, if every hole in Daniel's carefully maintained walls would be shaped like his fist, like he'd beaten them down to get through, and Daniel hadn't patched them up.

They splattered each other with orange paint and Johnny hoped, as he watched the second coat go on, that one day they'd forget what got them here, that they'd be happy and content and Robby would walk in from the other room like he'd never been gone.

One day at a time.

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